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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: AMBASSADOR DELIVERS, PUBLISHES DEMOCRACY
SPEECH

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¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: On March 16, the Ambassador delivered a speech on democracy to approximately 100 students and professors at the Kazakh University of Humanities and Law in Astana. The text of the speech was published in full on page three of the March 17 edition of "Express K", a daily Russian-language newspaper, and is expected to be run next week by "Turkestan," a weekly Kazakh-language paper. Following the speech, the Ambassador met with the university's president, Maksut Narikbayev, who is also a renowned jurist close to President Nazarbayev. Narikbayev said that Kazakhstan's younger generation will advance the country's democratic development. He frankly admitted that there have been problems with Kazakhstan's elections, and also expressed concerns about the concentration of power in the President's hands. END SUMMARY.

SPEECH DELIVERED TO STUDENTS, PUBLISHED IN LOCAL PRESS

¶3. (U) On March 16, the Ambassador delivered a speech on democracy to approximately 100 students and professors at the Kazakh University of Humanities and Law in Astana. (NOTE: The full text of the Ambassador's speech appears in para 9 below. END NOTE.) Following his address, the Ambassador answered questions on topics ranging from whether U.S. law applies equally to visitors to the United States as well as U.S. citizens, to whether changing mentalities is as important as changing institutions. The Ambassador underscored that rule of law is part of the U.S. democratic system, and thus the law applies equally to everyone. On the need to change mentalities, he agreed that democracy is a long process, noting that President Obama's election would not have been possible 50 years ago.

¶4. (U) On March 17, pro-government, Russian-language "Express K" daily (circulation 21,000) ran the speech in its entirety on page three. The Kazakh-language weekly newspaper "Turkestan"

(circulation 10,500) is expected to run the speech next week.
(NOTE: "Turkestan" could not publish the speech this week because that issue is entirely dedicated to the celebration of Nauryz. END NOTE.)

UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT PLACES HOPES ON YOUNG GENERATION

15. (SBU) Following the lecture, the university's president, Maksut Narikbayev -- a former Procurator General and Chief Justice of Kazakhstan's Supreme Court, current head of the pro-government Adilet political party, and longtime friend of President Nazarbayev -- publicly thanked the Ambassador for his remarks, and commented that the United States and Kazakhstan agree "on all major principles of democracy." He said that President Nazarbayev has chosen to undertake reforms step-by-step in order to "prevent developments similar to those that have taken place in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan."

16. (SBU) Narikbayev told the Ambassador that Kazakhstan has a young generation of educated people capable of further advancing the country's democratic development. He suggested that his generation had created the foundation, but young people "will have to complete construction of the roof." Turning to the topic of elections, Narikbayev said was surprised at the "double standards" of U.S. policy such as "holding guns to people's heads in Afghanistan," but also admitted that Kazakhstan has problems holding fair elections, commenting that "Kazakhstani election law is good enough for holding elections, but the 'bureaucratic mafia' does not apply it properly."

CONCERNS ABOUT CONCENTRATION OF POWER

17. (SBU) At a private meeting following the event, the Ambassador asked Narikbayev for his view of legal developments in Kazakhstan. Narikbayev responded that the last four years have been marked by an

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absence of responsibility. He said the 1995 constitution is hindering Kazakhstan's legal development and that he had been a member of the Council on Legal Policy that had worked to put together a new legal framework. Narikbayev noted that he had published a number of statements -- including an open appeal to the President -- citing the necessity of constitutional change. "The law does not spell out the responsibility of those who have been entrusted with different authorities," he claimed. "The President is the arbiter of all three branches of government -- the executive, legislative, and judicial. This system works only because Nazarbayev has a strong personality and the three branches look to him to tell them what to do next. They only act when he notices that something is wrong." Narikbayev opined that Kazakhstan needs something similar to the U.S. system, in which the President is responsible just for the executive branch and takes responsibility for his cabinet.

18. (SBU) The Ambassador agreed, noting that a dangerous situation is created when a strong leader, in charge of all three branches, leaves the scene without the institutions of succession well established. He stressed the need to build independent, enduring institutions, explaining that these are the guarantee of stability. Narikbayev replied that he had shared his own vision of "radical reform" in a public statement. He stressed the need for judges to be prepared and trained instead of relying on a chief justice and underscored that the current system creates an environment in which no politically-charged decision is made without checking with the chief justice. Narikbayev said he thought the global financial crisis would help Kazakhstan to move ahead with "new concepts."

TEXT OF THE AMBASSADOR'S SPEECH

19. (U) Begin text of speech:

I would like to say a few words about democracy. Specifically, I'd like to say what it is and what it is not.

The root of the English word democracy is an ancient Greek word, demos, which means people - and it means all people, not just an

individual class, not just the ruling elite, not just the powerful, not just the rich.

In most simple terms, democracy is the voice of the people. It means that all citizens of a nation, of any nation, have a voice in how they are governed. It's not the voice of the mob. It's not tyranny by a minority. It's not limited to a certain class.

Democracy is, rather, a system of consultation, cooperation, collaboration, and compromise among all citizens. It is individual citizens working together to take responsibility for their own well-being, and for the well-being of the nation. It is the farmer, school teachers and parents, the doctor, the business man and business woman, the local bureaucrat, and the most senior officials all listening to each other with respect and finding the fair compromise that best suits the majority. Democracy is the ultimate expression of peace and concord in a society.

In my diplomatic career in Central Asia, before I came to Kazakhstan, I have had some senior government officials tell me, "You have to understand we are Asian, and we have a different mind-set. Your democracy is impossible for us. We have to respect our history, our tradition, and our customs."

My respectful reply has always been that democracy is not a rigid ideology that can be imposed on a nation and a people. And, God forbid, anyone should ever think it can be imposed by force. Democracy always develops organically, and it always respects the history, tradition, and customs of the people.

I like to point out that democracy is indeed possible in Asia. We

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need only to look at examples like Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines, and India, among others. All are successful, functioning democracies. And each one of these Asian democracies is an organic expression of its people's history, tradition, and customs.

Sometimes people misunderstand and say that the U.S. view of democracy means Washington both openly and secretly supports opposition parties and personalities to overthrow existing governments. In the most extreme propaganda from some sources, some say that the United States organizes so-called Color Revolutions against existing governments. But that simply is not true. It's not true now, and it has not ever been true in the past. So-called Color Revolutions happened when corrupt governments manipulated election results to deny the voice of the people.

Yes, we pay attention to and stay in contact with so-called opposition politicians. That is simply the job of a diplomat. But in the end, for opposition leaders to be successful, they and their parties must build their own constituencies and develop their own political platforms of policies that will appeal to citizens and will be of benefit to the majority. If they cannot do that, they will not succeed - and no amount of U.S. open or secret support can ever guarantee their success, because democracy is the voice of the people.

Does the United States continue to support democracy and democratic individuals and their democratic movements? Bezuslovno, da! Imeno po-tomy shto eto nash ideal! But it is extremely important to distinguish between ideal and ideology. We firmly support our ideals, but we do not conspire to impose our ideology. At the same time, I assure you I will always speak out against unnecessary and egregious actions against individuals and against their political movements - when the facts are clear.

Sometimes, people in Kazakhstan ask if I think Kazakhstan is a democracy. That's a most difficult question to answer - because democracy is a process. At the most fundamental level, when I observe and evaluate democracy in Kazakhstan, I want to do so from a perspective that is based on objective reality.

Is Kazakhstan a fully mature democracy with all the institutions of democracy firmly in place? Well, probably not yet. But is it on a

democratic path? Yes, I really do think so.

Why can I say that? Because I am impressed by local citizens who work together to ask their akims to ensure that their apartments have heat and hot water, or to ensure that they receive apartments they have already paid for in advance. I am impressed by those who challenge the high-handedness of government officials who do not work to support the rights of the people. Citizens working together with their government to solve their common problems is democracy in action.

I can say that Kazakhstan is on a democratic path because I am impressed by private-citizen social movements, independent non-governmental organizations, and government-approved organizations that include a broad range of public opinion where citizens generally can debate openly and express their views freely without fear of being dragged off to jail. That, too, is democracy in action.

I can say that Kazakhstan is on a democratic path when I see the Prime Minister encourage citizen dialog with the government on his Internet blog, and when he encourages other ministers to open blogs for the public. I know some cynics dismiss this as clever PR, public relations. But I think this, too, is democracy in action.

If I could respectfully make one suggestion, I would say the next steps would be for Kazakhstan to create the institutions that

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guarantee the long-term success of any democratic nation. One of these institutions, for example, would be truly independent election commissions that guarantee full participation by all parties, NGOs, and social movements. The other side of this coin, of course, is that these parties, NGOs, and social movements must participate in this process responsibly. That, in fact, is another hallmark of democracy - that citizens play a responsible role: not to a party, not to the government, but to the nation.

Another goal should be to move toward a transparent and fully independent judicial system that guarantees the rule of law. In my country, the independent judiciary is essential to the rule of law. When our politicians and bureaucrats violate the law, sooner or later our legal system usually will catch up with them, and neither the government nor their political parties can protect them from the consequences. In our history, we have had mayors, governors, congressmen (members of parliament) and presidential advisers serve time in prison for violating the law. In a mature democracy, no one is above the law.

As the personal representative of the President of the United States, my highest responsibility is to work with the Government of Kazakhstan on all issues in which we have mutual national interests. Certainly, democracy is one of them. But it is only one issue. My responsibility as the Ambassador of the United States is to keep all issues in balance. I hope that I do so, at the same time that I never forget my nation's democratic ideals.

End text of speech.

HOAGLAND